

KANEGASAKI SISTER CITY COMMITTEE

Fiscal Year 2008

Members: Byron Koh (Chair), Nancy Bess, Denise Boyd, Carolyn Platt, Stephanie Joyce, Helen MacMellon, Yuko Takahashi

Staff Liaison: Nancy Pagano

Proposal from Mayor Takahashi

In September KSCC Chair Byron Koh received word from our Kanegasaki liaison Miyuki Sato that Mayor Takahashi wanted to invite an English teacher from Amherst to come to Kanegasaki for at least one year to teach English and Amherst culture. The position would be as “Coordinator of International Relations of Kanegasaki”. The teacher would have his/her rent and salary paid by the city. This teacher would not have to speak fluent Japanese. The KSCC decided that more information about this proposal was needed before deciding to undertake a search for the right person. It seemed clear that the teacher going to Kanegasaki would need to have connections with business, the schools and the ability to connect with Amherst resources to help with the facilitation of ideas between the two cities. The KSCC identified areas that would need further discussion and made some recommendations to consider and these were shared with the Mayor:

- A year’s length of service might be too long a commitment—perhaps a few weeks to a few months would appeal to more applicants.
- Because the academic year for teachers here is September through May, and Kanegasaki’s starts in April, the KSCC suggested June, July and August as being particularly attractive to teachers as this time period would not jeopardize contractual obligations already in place.
- The KSCC thought that it would not be difficult to find an Amherst citizen (not necessarily a teacher) who would welcome the opportunity to go to Kanegasaki to offer knowledge in their own professional discipline and who could further understanding of Amherst culture. It would also not be difficult to find a graduate student from one of the local colleges who would be interested and who had basic Japanese language ability. The difficulty would be to find someone qualified to teach English as a second language who also understood the culture and traditions of the community and could be relied upon to commit to staying in the Amherst area to promoting further understanding of the Sister City relationship after the year in Japan.

The Mayor is rethinking his idea and wrote to say he understands the practicalities involved and is committed to advancing our mutual understandings and encouraging the people of Kanegasaki to learn English. He welcomes our advice and ideas about how to do this.

Annual March Visit of Kanegasaki Middle School Students

The 2008 Kanegasaki Middle School visit was another successful event. Fifteen students and three chaperones (Miyuki Sato of the Central Lifelong Learning Center, Kanegasaki Vice-Principal Nobuyuki Kudo, and Takahashi Yukihiro of the Mizusawa Tourist Service) arrived Wednesday, March 19st, at the Amherst Town Hall where eager families, Town officials and KSCC members greeted them. Kanegasaki Committee members Nancy Bess and Nancy Pagano organized the welcome party, while Town Manager Laurence Shaffer and Select Board Chair Gerry Weiss, made official welcoming remarks. Denise Boyd, who is a KSCC committee member as well as the coordinator for the exchange for the Amherst Middle School, introduced the Japanese students to their host families. Once students and families left for their homes, the

chaperones were taken to their accommodations at the Lord Jeffery Inn and later to dinner by Denise Boyd and Libby Hurley from the Middle School and Yuko Takahashi from the KSCC.

The first full day of the Amherst stay (Thursday, 3/20), the chaperones and students visited the Amherst Regional Middle School (ARMS) and the students were able to attend classes with their host students. The chaperones were welcomed by Principal, Ms. Fran Ziperstein, and were given a tour of the school. Afterward the chaperones had a chance to meet with the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Jere Hochman, before rejoining the Japanese students for an English lesson. That evening the students spent with the host families. The chaperones were treated to a delicious dinner prepared by members of the KSCC at the home of member Nancy Bess before returning to their accommodations at the Lord Jeffrey Inn.

Early Friday, Denise picked the chaperones up at the Lord Jeff and brought them to the Middle School where they joined the host students and visiting students for a class and then the visiting students and chaperones were brought on a field trip to Historic Old Deerfield and the nearby Butterfly Museum. That evening, while the Japanese students were entertained by the host families, KSCC members took the chaperones out to dinner at Bertucci's.

The last day of the visit, Saturday, included shopping time at Yankee Candle and Richardson's Candy Kitchen in Deerfield for the chaperones with KSCC liaison Nancy Pagano. Following this, the chaperones were driven to Louise Reilly's home for lunch and later they were brought to the Northampton Bowling Alley for a bowling party with the Japanese students and American host students and their families. That evening a lovely potluck Farewell Dinner was held at the Amherst Regional High School with KSCC members, host families and all students and chaperones.

Amherst-Kanegasaki Sister Library Exchange

The Amherst-Kanegasaki Sister Library relationship continues. Last winter 2007, Kanegasaki sent the Jones Library about a dozen books for its adult collections. This following spring 2008, the Jones sent Kanegasaki a variety of sixteen books and AV items lovingly chosen by KSCC member and Librarian Carolyn Platt.

Many of the materials sent were used, but in like-new condition. This was a bit of a concern to Carolyn, but because of budget constraints, it couldn't be helped. The kind people from Kanegasaki let Carolyn know that our friendship is the most important thing and they stated that used books are fine with them. Another shipment is already being prepared for the fall.

Town Manager Plans Visit to Kanegasaki

Larry Shaffer met with the KSCC to discuss his desire to visit all of the Amherst sister cities during his tenure. This will mean visiting Kanegasaki, Japan; La Paz Centro in Nicaragua; and Nyeri, Kenya.

Kanegasaki Mayor Yoshiichi Takahashi would very much like to have this happen in 2010 when he has a special celebration planned marking the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the Kanegasaki Friendship Committee. Town Manager Laurence Shaffer is amenable to that timing and approached the KSCC to help with the trip coordination and gifts. KSCC members are brainstorming about creating a memory book for this occasion.

Looking Ahead

In FY 09, the KSCC will continue to focus on assisting school and Amherst Town officials when Kanegasaki contingents visit Amherst. We are committed to supporting the important work of promoting peace and understanding between different cultures.

Respectfully submitted, Nancy Hirsh Pagano, Secretary/Staff Liaison